



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

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Haiti Disaster Assistance Continues USAID Rebuilds Infrastructure, Strengthens Disaster Preparedness

USAID continues to provide assistance to residents afflicted by the tropical storms that devastated Haiti in August and September. In addition to providing over \$31 million in emergency food and humanitarian assistance, USAID is undertaking a series of projects to assist the Haitian people in their long-term recovery efforts. This includes funding projects designed to bring greater stability to vulnerable communities through construction and rehabilitation of key infrastructure such as irrigation canals and wells, paving roads, and soil conservation projects. Many of these projects fulfill an important additional function: providing employment for local residents, sometimes using a rotation system to ensure that a larger number of workers and families benefit from the income.

Nearly one-third of the seaport town of Gonaïves was destroyed by the storms, including the city's primary water system. Working with the state water authority, the USAID-funded PREPEP program restored the system and distributed water to 50,000 residents, reducing the potential for increased water-borne diseases. The same program is working to clear and repair Ruelle Sajous, an important access road for the city. With several feet of mud and debris deposited by the flood, the equivalent of 230 dump truck loads of mud and debris must be removed to allow for paving. This will give aid agencies access to areas of Gonaïves previously not accessible by vehicle.

USAID disaster readiness experts are working in the Haitian government disaster agency, the Direction de la Protection Civile, to build its capacity to deal with future disasters. There is evidence that disaster risk reduction programs such as early warning systems are helping reduce the human toll from tropical storms. Other tropical storms, while causing less extensive damage than the 2008 storms, resulted in greater loss of life. For example, Hurricane Jeanne in 2004 affected 297,900 Haitians and resulted in 2,754

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Clockwise from top left: community meeting in Carrefour-Fueilles; installing water pump in Bel Air; mayor of Les Cayes thanks USAID for assistance; trucks removing mud and debris on Ruelle Sajous in Gonaïves. Photos: IOM

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AMAZONIAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES KEY PARTNERS IN USAID CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Sometimes the most simple initiatives can have the greatest payoff. Recently, USAID's Initiative for the Conservation of the Andean Amazon (ICAA) assisted several park guards from the Cofan indigenous group in northern Ecuador in obtaining driver's licenses, as well as in purchasing vehicles. Already, the positive impact of these efforts is being felt widely. The park guards can now move across the Cofan territories with greater ease than before, significantly increasing their ability to control threats such as land invasions and illegal mining and logging.

The Amazon Basin is one of the most culturally and biologically diverse areas in the world, home to more than 3 million indigenous people, representing 350 ethnic or indigenous groups, and one-third of the world's biological species. The Amazon's waters and forests provide not only



Cofan park rangers on patrol in the Cofan Bermejo Ecological Reserve

valuable resources like timber and medicine, but also environmental benefits that are felt globally, such as climate moderation. However, deforestation, unsustainable farming practices, poorly planned infrastructure and climate change imperil not only plant and animal species but also the indigenous cultures that depend on these resources for their livelihoods.

Research has shown that the presence of tribal groups in the Amazon is positively correlated with the maintenance of intact and healthy forest tracts. Many indigenous communities retain significant traditional knowledge on natural resource management and are able to monitor and protect their territorial lands more effectively than limited staff of national parks or other protected areas. Partnering with indigenous peoples offers an opportunity to enhance quality of life and empower sometimes marginalized communities while also conserving important natural resources.

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fatalities. In contrast, the storms of 2008, which cumulatively affected 826,685 people, resulted in a significantly lower number of fatalities, a total of 793.

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is also supporting major initiatives to strengthen disaster preparedness throughout the LAC Region, including a new five-year project with Florida International University to stimulate and strengthen disaster risk reduction programs through "communities of practice," groups of key stakeholders from different sectors working to reduce vulnerabilities, and the Disaster Management Alliance, a partnership with leading private sector organizations to deliver community-level risk-reduction programs.

USAID Announces School Scholarships, Diaspora Challenge Fund for Haiti

USAID will provide nearly 48,000 scholarships under its basic education program in Haiti to assist low-income families with the costs of sending children to school. Vulnerable children will be identified in hurricane-devastated urban slums to receive the assistance. Support will include tuition, uniforms, school supplies, and schoolbooks. The package will also include school improvement projects and an academic mentoring program for participants.

USAID is also working to support the efforts of Haitian diaspora leaders living in the United States to bring investment to Haiti. In a meeting with diaspora leaders in New York, Administrator Henrietta Fore announced the creation of a Diaspora Investment Challenge Facility to provide grants of up to \$100,000 to leverage Haitian diaspora business investment in Haiti on a basis of at least 2 to 1. The program will also include technical assistance on business development and a credit guaranty program with local banks to improve access to credit. USAID will provide initial funding of \$2 million for the challenge fund.



Guatemalan youth receive vocational training through USAID's community-based policing project

GUATEMALA COMMUNITY-BASED POLICING EXPANDS

Citizens of many Latin American countries today identify personal security as one of their greatest concerns. According to the World Bank, the homicide rate in the region has increased 50% since the 1980s, and some Central American countries now have homicide rates above 50 per 100,000 inhabitants. The rise of drug trafficking, transnational gangs and organized crime is an increasing threat to the stability of Mexico and Central America, and is the main impetus for the Mérida Initiative, a multi-year program to support law enforcement operations and provide technical assistance for long-term reform and oversight of security agencies in the region. USAID assists LAC countries in addressing crime through a number of programs, including through support for justice reform, programs to expand citizens' access to justice, and violence prevention programs.

In Guatemala, USAID introduced community-based policing in Villa Nueva, a populous suburb of Guatemala City, in 2006. Focused on promoting practices that improve relations between law enforcement and communities, the program provided training to police on techniques for patrolling neighborhoods and investigating crimes and stimulated collaboration between police and residents to develop crime prevention initiatives such as school safety programs and programs for at-risk youth. This project saw some significant achievements, most notably the eradication of gang-related harassment at public schools in Villa Nueva.

Building on this initial success, the program is set to expand over the next year to a variety of locales, including several locations where the program will benefit from proximity to 24-hour courts – USAID-supported facilities where citizens receive uninterrupted judicial, prosecutorial, public defense and police services – such as Guatemala City and Escuintla. The program will also engage Guatemala's Ministry of Governance to support development of administrative policies and practices that support community-based policing at a national level.

Policing projects like this one may become more common in Central America: the Mérida Initiative includes a proposed community policing component for Central America focused on strengthening the role of local officials and community leaders in the oversight of national police and encouraging stronger local engagement with law enforcement officials. Invigorating local government ownership in public security and building its capacity to play a larger role will be key to the sustainability of this effort.

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While the indigenous people of the Amazon have made great gains in recognition and representation, they are still developing the technical and administrative capacities to maneuver through processes such as land titling and natural resource management. By supporting programs aimed at working with indigenous organizations and territories, USAID is helping to strengthen these capacities so that the indigenous can become more effective partners for conservation in the Amazon. For example, ICAA works to promote the participation of indigenous peoples in the legalization, protection and management of lands; assists indigenous communities in developing local management plans and procedures to improve land tenure; and strengthens indigenous political participation at all levels. In partnership with national and local governments and nongovernmental organizations, USAID has supported activities as basic as park guard vehicle certification and as significant as the declaration of new indigenous territories.

ICAA also includes a small grants program aimed at building capacity and strengthening ties between diverse regional stakeholders in order to stimulate innovation and bring greater scale to conservation programs. During recent weeks USAID partners and 100 indigenous leaders joined together in three proposal-writing clinics. Indigenous communities had submitted initial proposals earlier, and the clinics brought selected applicants together to strengthen their project development and proposal writing skills. At the end of one course, an indigenous leader from Peru said, "What did I learn? The most important thing is knowing that there are organizations out there that support the vulnerable communities in the Andean Amazon."

FIRST LADY'S VISIT HIGHLIGHTS USAID EARTH-QUAKE RECONSTRUCTION WORK IN PERU

Prior to joining President Bush in Lima for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting, First Lady Laura Bush visited two USAID projects on November 21 in the region of Ica, an area that was devastated by an 8.0 magnitude earthquake in August 2007. Mrs. Bush first visited the San Clemente Health Center, recently rebuilt with USAID assistance, and its newly built maternity ward, where she donated an ultrasound machine for prenatal care. Mrs. Bush then visited a housing reconstruction project, where she observed home-building using earthquake-resistant technology, toured a newly constructed home, and handed keys for a new home to a family that had lost its home in the earthquake.



First Lady Laura Bush at San Clemente Health Center

NEW JUSTICE HOUSE OPENS IN COLOMBIA



Zaragoza Justice House

Colombia's Minister of Interior and Justice, the governor of Antioquia and the mayor of Zaragoza were among 200 participants in the inauguration of the Zaragoza regional justice house on November 9. Located in a rural, post-conflict area with a large Afro-Colombian population, the Zaragoza justice house will provide a range of justice sector services to this traditionally vulnerable population, a key objective of USAID's justice program. The facility is co-financed by USAID, the Colombian government, local governments, and private sector contributors.

Justice houses are service centers that offer citizens access to justice, conflict resolution and social services in one location, typically with representation from law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, forensic investigators, legal aid clinics, community mediators and conciliators, and family counseling and social service providers. Since 1995, USAID has helped to establish 48 justice houses throughout the country, providing services to over 7.2 million Colombians. The Colombian Justice House program has been recognized by development experts throughout the world as a model for extending access to justice to underserved and vulnerable populations.

BRIEFS FROM LAC MISSIONS

Nicaragua: Sandinistas Claim Victory in Municipal Elections Marred by Irregularities – Unrest followed municipal elections held on November 9, with mobs of Sandinista government supporters blocking marchers attempting to protest irregularities and lack of transparency in the tabulation of results. On November 20, Nicaragua's electoral authority formally announced that the governing Sandinista party had won 105 of 146 municipalities, including Managua, and President Ortega decreed the results as final and legitimate the next day. Opposition parties plan to press for an annulment of the election results in the National Assembly, through legislation the government considers unconstitutional. The Catholic Bishops' Council, the private business sector, civil society organizations, the U.S. Government, the European Union, and other donors have expressed serious concerns about the lack of transparency and impartiality of the municipal elections and have called on the Nicaraguan government to peacefully resolve the crisis. Under difficult circumstances, USAID democracy partners in Nicaragua carried out vigorous efforts to promote a fair and transparent election with get-out-the-vote campaigns, voter education, and training for political parties, civil society and media in electoral processes and citizen participation. The Ortega government ultimately prohibited domestic observers.

Colombia: USAID Subgrantee Wins Secretary's Award for Corporate Excellence – SURevolution, a U.S. firm and USAID/Colombia subgrantee, was the small business winner of the Secretary of State's Annual Award for Corporate Excellence. SURevolution has assisted Colombia's vulnerable populations to open new markets for their world-class art and handicrafts in the United States, Europe, and Asia by utilizing a number of innovative business models. By helping these groups generate much-needed incomes, SURevolution is breaking the poverty cycle and promoting peace and reconciliation in a complicated environment. The Secretary of State awards the ACE in recognition of the vital role that U.S. businesses play worldwide to advance good corporate governance and democratic principles and to highlight the United States' commitment to promoting exemplary business practices.

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